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ADVENTURES OF A NIGHT IN MESSINA.

PAULINA, who paid very little attention to me, except that she ordered me to pull the brim of my hat a little over my eyes, as I was "so very unlike Camillo," seemed now in no hurry to depart, and answered my suggestions with a very uncivil shrug of the shoulders. This cavalier treatment rather vexed me; now I was on the point of throwing up my part and marching off to the hotel, when I reflected that this would be considered a base trick. Besides, after all, Paulina was a lovely woman; and kept me quiet, in spite of her indifference, by the mere force of her beauty. Perhaps she perceived this, the gipsy! and was resolved to put her charms to the test.

In about half an hour a stout jolly-faced man came in. He was Camillo's servant, and informed us that the gates had been passed in safety, and that by this time, as he expressed it to me with a true London accent, "The 'appy couple were galloping on the wings of 'ymen to the long-wished-for 'aven; and may they reach it—wind and weather permitting—errors excepted—which here's to. Amen!" So saying, he winked, and poured out a glass of wine and drank to the health of the "appy couple;" and, having wiped his mouth, added, "Whom God hath joined let no man put asunder. Isn't that it, youngster, chapter and verse, eh? So you are to have a lark with Miss Paulina. My eyes! isn't she a stunner? But so deucedly virtuous! By the way, young'un, what was virtue made for? Do you give it up?"

I was so astounded by the fellow's impudence, that I remained looking at him without uttering a single word, or even attempting to do so. Paulina, who did not understand what was said, here broke in, and told Tommaso, as she called him, that talking time was over. In another minute, Signor Tommaso (who, I may as well say here, was an honest fellow, made a little too forward by copious libations and a consciousness of the valuable service he had rendered his master) conducted us to the gate, wished me rather ironically a pleasant ride, and turned us both out with the exclamation, "Corpo Tobacio" (he meant *Corpo di Bacco*), "here's a precious go!"

There was a sturdy mule at the door, held by a ragged wild-looking boy. I was soon mounted upon it, with Paulina behind me, and off we went by a bye street, the boy guiding, towards the Palermo gate. A patrol meeting us, asked where we were going. I mentioned my assumed name, and was allowed to proceed immediately. The same talisman, with the addition of the pass-word, procured us free exit by the gate; and in a quarter of an hour we were climbing the fine military road that ascends the mountains in that direction. At length we entered a ravine with wooded sides; and, some clouds stealing across the path of the moon, we were often in complete darkness. The boy, who never spoke a word except to his mule, seemed, however, to be perfectly acquainted with the road, and went on steadily, as if determined to reach some distant point.

Paulina had scarcely uttered a word all this while; and as in such an adventure the voice is naturally oppressed by excitement, I had not made many attempts to break the silence. Now, however, I thought it high time to have a little quiet talk on my own account, and turning round as far as I could to Paulina, who held me carelessly round the waist, paid her two or three elegant compliments. "My dear young'un," said she, in her abominable patronizing way, "I am quite pleased if you have a good opinion of me; because you have shown a great deal of resolution in this business which no way concerned you. A madcap is not always a fool; and I declare that on consideration I have a great respect for you. I will prove it, by giving you a piece of good advice. Do not mistake me for a waiting-maid ready to amuse you in any way you please; and, above all, do not take any liberties with me. That boy, who understands only his patois, has eyes and a tongue; and if he reports ill of you to Vannetto, you will learn how a Sicilian defends the honour of his affianced."

"You are too hasty, my tragedy queen," said I, with a slight shudder, but endeavouring to appear unconcerned; "but if you wish it I will not open my lips again." "Bah!"

replied she, in an overbearing contemptuous tone; "agreeable companion would you be in that case! Are you Englishmen all as stupid as Tommaso? Have you nothing to say to a woman but what means contempt?" "Here is a waiting-maid with a vengeance," thought I; "she insists on being talked to, and declines listening to nonsense." "Well, Paulina," said I, very frankly, as I turned my back quite on her, lest the firmness of my seat should be compromised, "you are the first woman of your class who has spoken to me in this way." There was a pause; and then she began to say, as if speaking to herself, in a low, musical, but perfectly audible voice, "My class—why my class? Yet you are right. There are classes in this world degraded and dishonoured by their very condition, and in whom rigid virtue is almost an impertinence. People are born into these classes as they are born men or women, Italians or English; and inherit their morals as you inherit your protestantism, we our poetical belief." "Positively, Paulina," said I, turning round again, "you are either a philosopher—" "Or a fool," quoth she, looking archly in my face, as the moon fell brightly upon us through a cleft in the forest that heaved its huge dim waves of foliage around.

We had ridden, perhaps, for about two hours, when we reached a hut built against an overhanging precipice. Here the boy, without asking any instructions, stopped, and Paulina slid lightly to the ground. I followed her example, and soon found myself in the only chamber of the hut. A small lamp was lighted; and Paulina announced that here we were to pass the night. Being perfectly familiar with her now, and no longer in a sentimental mood, I frankly confessed that I was hungry; and the boy, being made acquainted with the fact, produced from a little secret cupboard some bread, cheese, and wine. All then ate heartily; and Paulina, who did the honours of the house admirably, finished off by proposing a bumper to Sicilian independence. I, by this time, understood that she belonged to the secret association which has so long existed for the purpose, at a fitting opportunity, of throwing off the Neapolitan yoke; and many of her enthusiastic ideas were explained. I failed, however, in turning the conversation to her own history; and a great deal of her character remained a mystery. After supper, she talked a little while about what she called the pale loves of Camillo and Spornanza, two turtle doves who deserved to be kept in a golden cage and fed on sugar and milk. I learned many details which proved them to be admirably adapted one to another, and perfectly deserving of happiness; but it was evident that Paulina thought less of Camillo than she would otherwise have done; because, instead of inspiring his young wife with liberal ideas, he talked to her only of Shakspeare and Dante; and, sentiment in abeyance, was nothing but an active speculator in sulphur and corn. However, she seemed tenderly attached to her mistress—preferring only Vannetto to her—and wished her a prosperous journey with tears in her eyes. At length, resuming her old peremptory manner, my strange companion bade me lie down on a large mat, wrap myself in my cloak, and go to sleep with my face to the wall. As this was said with a marked yawn, I complied; and, though wakeful at first, was at last dreaming that the said Paulina, spectacle on nose, was changed into a very fierce schoolmaster, who told me that *Italia* rhymed to *Gloria*, and threw his slippers at me because I seemed to doubt.

When I awoke, the sun in horizontal streams of gold was breaking through the crazy doorway of the hut, and gently warming my eyelids. I got up, and found myself alone. Suddenly Paulina appeared, coming towards me with a fine, handsome young man, dressed like a Sicilian peasant, and armed with a gun. "This is Vannetto," said she. The young man held out his hand frankly, and gave me an iron squeeze. We were soon friends, and talked over many things. They said that I must soon prepare to depart, unless I chose to accept their hospitality for a fortnight or so, and see how the free citizens of Sicily (called in government proclamation *banditti*) passed their time. I should have accepted, had I not feared to leave my friend to make all sorts of improper suppositions. As it was, I resolved to start.

Paulina accompanied me a little way by the side of the mule, guided by the taciturn boy. "*Mio amico*," said she at parting, without any patronising air; "Go in peace, and God guard and bless you. I shall pray for you as for a brother; and, *mio amico*—we may never meet again, in this world at least; but, if you do not utterly despise the companion of this night's adventure, remember her at a future time, and, for her sake (here her voice trembled) speak a word or write a word in favour of poor, dear, oppressed Sicily. Addio! addio!"

So far the adventure was romantic enough; but I was arrested as I walked, after parting from my mule and its boy, with affected indifference through the gate; or rather, I should say, was civilly requested to wait on the governor. I found

my friend with him, stoutly denying any knowledge of the transaction. My arrival changed the face of matters; for as (which I had forgotten to mention, but it comes in as well here) Vannetto had descried the ship containing the two fugitives making away under full press of canvass early in the morning, I felt at liberty to speak out. The governor more than insinuated that I was an impertinent meddler; and let out that Tommaso, in a state of immense intoxication, had been to the palace, and allowed himself, perhaps designedly, to be pumped. Both myself and friend were admonished to keep what we knew to ourselves, and advised to go on board as soon as possible; which we did, without having discovered the governor's true sentiments.

THE TURKS AND THEIR INSTITUTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

WE first hear of the Turks in the sixth century, as the most despised portion of the slaves of the great khan, a chief of the Geougen, one of the Tartar hordes, which for ages have inhabited, or rather possessed, the great plains of central Asia.* Their haunts lay mostly in the neighbourhood of the chain of mountains known as the Altai range, which were very fertile in minerals, particularly iron, and the Turks were mostly employed in extracting the ore and forging it. How long the latter remained in this degraded state, we know not, but at last a bold and energetic leader arose amongst them, named Bertezend, and persuaded them to assert their freedom and independence. The revolt proved successful; his daring was rewarded by a crown, and under his command the Turks distinguished themselves by several victories over the neighbouring tribes. The new khan now had the hardihood to seek the hand of his old master's daughter in marriage, but his alliance was contemptuously rejected. He met with better success amongst the Chinese, who bestowed on him one of their princesses, and the insult he had received from the Geougen was avenged in a great battle, in which nearly the whole of that nation was extirpated and their dominion put an end to, and that of the Turks took its place. Their heads, however, were not turned by prosperity, and they preserved the memory of their origin by an annual ceremony, at which a piece of iron was heated in the fire and hammered upon an anvil by the prince and his chief officers in succession; and even when their dominions covered a great tract of territory, they never encamped far from Mount Altai, their former abode. Their emperor's throne was always turned towards the east, and his tent was distinguished by a spear surmounted by a golden wolf, thrust in the ground at the door. They seem to have sacrificed to a supreme being, and to have sung hymns in honour of fire and air, earth and water, as deities of an inferior order. They had unwritten laws, in which offences against morality, or breaches of military discipline, were punished with terrible severity. One of their armies consisted of four hundred thousand men, and in less than fifty years they were connected in loans or alliances with the Romans, the Chinese, and the Persians, and all this while they were still a nomade horde of shepherds. They were terrible enemies to the Chinese, whose empire they invaded as often as internal dissensions gave them a prospect of success, and such was their superiority in arms to their civilized opponents, that their retreat was invariably purchased by subsidies. Their empire at last, however, became large and unwieldy; viceroys who were appointed became turbulent and revolted; continued successes introduced luxury and carelessness; the conquerors became enervated, and the tribes which they had subjugated rose in revolt, so that their dominion was overthrown after it had lasted for two hundred years.

The next time their name comes prominently before us in history, it is as guards of the Mussulman Caliph of the

Saracens, Motassem, who reigned in splendour at Bagdad between the years 841 and 870. He had recruited his mercenary forces by robust Turkish youths, either taken in war or purchased in trade, who were trained to bear arms, and instructed in the doctrines of the Mahometan faith. Fifty thousand of them at one time occupied the capital, while their chiefs filled the principal offices in the royal household, and acted as viceroys of the provinces. They behaved as hired soldiers may always be expected to act amongst a luxurious and enervated people, for the Arabs had by this time lost much of the warlike fervour which had distinguished them when they issued from their deserts to propagate the new faith. They rose in insurrection almost at regular intervals, upon receiving the least cause of discontent, murdered and maltreated the reigning prince, and disposed of the crown as they pleased, just as the prætorian guards had done at Rome centuries before.

It was in the ninth century, however, that the Turks made themselves known to Europe, in all their might and ferocity, under the name of *Ungars* or *Hungarians*. They crossed the frontiers of the Roman empire in the year 889, in huge squadrons of cavalry, took possession of the province of Pannonia, and swept over Bavaria, Swabia, and Franconia, with such speed, that in one day they laid waste a tract of country fifty miles in circuit. In the year 900 they had penetrated as far as the Pyrenees, and in 924 they crossed the Alps, and desolated Italy; and it was not till the year 935 that they were defeated and repelled by the skill and valour of Henry the Fowler and Otho the Great, two Saxon princes, and settled down peaceably in modern Hungary.

The tribe were now scattered loosely over the desert from China to the Oxus and the Danube; one branch of it had founded a republic in Europe, and men of Turkish extraction were the guards and ministers of most of the Asiatic thrones. It was in the year 997 in which Mahmud the Gaznevide, the son of a Turkish emir, seized the throne of the Persian caliphs and assumed the title of *sultan*. He was famed as a warrior, and made twelve expeditions into Hindostan; but he was still unable to contend against the barbarous hordes of his own countrymen who hovered on the confines of his empire. During his lifetime, however, he managed to keep them in subjection and in peace; but during the reign of his son and successor, Massoud, in the year 1038, they burst upon Persia like an avalanche, and at the great battle of Zendeccan the sultan was defeated, and lost both his kingdom and his life.

The Turks now proceeded to the election of a king; and the choice fell upon Togrul Bey, the grandson of Seljuk, from whom the dynasty received the appellation of Seljukian. Under him, Persia reached the highest pitch of power and importance; he delivered the caliph of Bagdad from the assaults of a rival, and finally succeeded to his throne; and, for the first time, made the arms of the Turks feared at Constantinople.

Under his successor, the famous and terrible Alp Arslan, the prestige of Turkish valour and ferocity was fully upheld. He conquered Georgia and Armenia, and passing across the

* There was a tradition amongst them that the founder of their tribe was, like Romulus, suckled by a she-wolf, and they preserved the figure of that animal on their banners.